

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR,
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS
ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF
HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 2, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2127) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 2127, making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, as well as several Related Agencies.

Mr. Chairman, traditionally, the Labor-HHS-Education bill has been one of the most important bills before Congress each year. It funds programs that are key to the Nation's well-being: health, education, social and employment services that touch every person in the United States and provide the means for all of us to live healthier and more productive lives.

That is why this bill, this year, is such a tragic mistake. Its initial problem was the misguided priorities the Appropriations Committee used in allocating spending authority among the subcommittees. A grater problem is the equally misguided priorities used in writing the bill.

No amount of tinkering will make H.R. 2127 livable. Mr. Chairman; the Appropriations Committee should simply tear it down and rebuild it from the ground up.

In many ways, H.R. 2127 is a 180-degree turn from the priorities in last year's bill, in which, even within tight budgetary limits, we were able to strengthen the Nation's investment in our youngest children by increasing funding for Head Start and Healthy Start.

We were able to increase funding for title I, our country's primary mechanism for assisting disadvantaged children, and continue to fund Pell grants and Federal students loans, strengthening our commitment to access to higher education regardless of one's ability to pay.

We were able to strengthen our ability to save lives and improve health with increases for critical public health, health research, and health care programs.

We were able to increase funds for key employment and training programs.

H.R. 2127 is in sharp contrast to those priorities.

It cuts Head Start—cuts Head Start, Mr. Chairman—and whacks 50 percent out of Healthy Start.

It guts spending for title I and for bilingual and migrant education, and totally eliminates funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Dropout Prevention, vital literacy programs, and Goals 2000, President Clinton's ambitious plan to prepare our children for the 21st century.

Minor increases in certain health spending come at the expense of an important family

planning program and both the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health and the Office of the Surgeon General, all of which are eliminated under this bill.

It slashes key employment and training programs and kills the summer youth program.

Just as hundreds of unfortunate people have died in the nationwide heat wave, it kills the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

And so far, Mr. Chairman, I have referred only to the funding priorities in this bill.

The limitations and legislative provisions in H.R. 2127 are far-reaching meddling in issues under the jurisdiction of authorizing committees.

Among other things, they threaten the health and safety of women, the safety and rights of working people, and the ability of Federal grantees to share their expertise with or represent the needs of their members and clients before policymakers.

Mr. Chairman, this cruel bill makes victims of the most vulnerable people in our Nation, our children, our seniors, our minorities, even our increasingly beleaguered working people.

There is just no reason to support such a mean-spirited bill. I urge my colleagues simply to vote it down and let the Appropriations Committee try again to produce a new bill that will deserve the support of the House.

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SPEECH OF
HON. BRUCE F. VENTO

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 2, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2127) making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2127, the Labor-HHS-Education appropriation for fiscal year 1996. More than any other legislation, this bill represents an all-out attack against working families. This bill is, in fact, an assault on American working families. Under the Republican leadership this bill targets the very programs that help working families to get ahead and to make a better life for their families.

This legislation seeks to return to the sad days of the 1930's, yesterdays work environment, when the working man and woman was nothing more than a tool for corporate interests—discarded when broken on the job. This antiworker bill eliminates the concept of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. This legislation attempts to silence the voice of American workers by undermining their right to seek fair representation in the workplace through law. This legislation attacks the children of working families by putting them at risk in the workplace and by denying them the essential education assistance that they need to get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, denying our children the opportunity to attain requisite skills is perhaps

the most wrongheaded and heartless feature of this measure. The families and working people that I represent work hard to provide for their families. Some are more fortunate and can plan ahead for their children's education. Others have to struggle to meet the day-to-day expenses. To cut vocational education, student loan and grant programs slams the door to opportunity in the face of youth from working families and destroys their dreams of a good life.

Mr. Speaker, I most strenuously object to the treatment of basic worker rights and protections in this spending legislation. Today on the House floor, the term "workers' right to know" has taken on a different meaning. In the past that phrase referred to the right of workers to know when they worked with materials hazardous to their health. Today, workers' right to know, should be a warning that congressional actions are hazardous to workers' health and rights.

As the House considers this Labor-HHS appropriations, C-SPAN should include a workers right to know disclaimer that this bill is hazardous to workers. This workers' hazardous warning should point out the impact of the bill on:

Workers health—a 33-percent cut in OSHA which means that thousands more American workers are going to be injured or die on the job. Workers' lives, health, and safety are at risk on the job. Over 1.7 million workers are seriously injured on the job each year. The cuts in OSHA will only exacerbate the situation.

Workers pay—workers are getting short-changed by this legislation. The 12-percent cut in the employment standards administration means that businesses can ignore minimum wage and overtime requirements with impunity.

Workers' rights to representation—this legislation denies workers a fair chance to unite to fight for themselves and their families. The 30-percent cut in the Labor Relations Board will do more than tilt the management-labor playing field in favor of the companies. This cut will lock out the unions and frustrate workers' ability to be represented and achieve positive results.

This bill will also have a disastrous impact on education in this country. This measure denies opportunity for our youth, cutting programs designed to equip them for the world of work.

And the litany of cuts to education programs goes on with cuts to Head Start, title 1, safe and drug-free schools and summer jobs programs which in essence strike at our most vulnerable children and most apparent needs evident in today's America. Eliminating programs to help communities train teachers and improve student performance are a slap in the face to a nation that places education as a No. 1 priority. Limiting access to higher education and job training programs pulls the ladder to a better future away from the young men and women who will be charged to lead our Nation into the next century.

For my State of Minnesota alone this means that, in 1996, 2,081 children would be denied Head Start, 14,000 students would go without title 1 education benefits, over 5,000 Minnesota youths would miss their first summer job opportunity, 658 young people would be denied the chance to serve in Americorps,